



"Alaska at its Best!"

## CITY OF PALMER

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April 4, 2007

Department of Transportation and Public Facilities  
STIP Comments  
Division of Program Development  
P.O. Box 112500  
Juneau, AK 99801-2500

This letter contains the City of Palmer's comments on the Department of Transportation and Public Facility's (DOT & PF) Draft 2006-2009 Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP).

Palmer urges DOT & PF to provide for increased funding to build needed transportation projects in the Palmer and Matanuska-Susitna Borough area. The Matanuska-Susitna Borough is the fastest growing area in Alaska and will soon pass Fairbanks as the State's second largest municipality. The Borough estimates that the Borough population will more than double by 2025 to approximately 170,000 residents. Population growth brings more traffic and congestion to local roads. The Borough's Long Range Transportation Plan identifies the need for significant investment in new and existing road systems in the central Borough area to meet present and future traffic demands.

In the Palmer area, population and traffic continue to increase. According to the DOT & PF 2005 *Annual Traffic Volume Report*, average daily traffic on the Glenn Highway south of Palmer has increased 20% since 1999. Traffic on the Palmer-Wasilla Highway west of Palmer has increased 17% in that period, with average annual daily traffic counts up to 16,000. These two-lane roads do not function safely at these traffic levels.

The prospect of lower funding available for the STIP underscores the need for the STIP to prioritize projects that will serve areas where the need for adequate, safe transportation facilities is the greatest. With decreasing funds, it is important that the State of Alaska allocate non-earmarked transportation funding to projects that effectively meet the demands of the state's growing population. For example, in the Palmer area, there is a compelling need to upgrade congested and unsafe two-lane highways like the Glenn Highway and the Palmer-Wasilla Highway. Palmer supports the allocation of \$20 million in State funds to improve the east end of the Palmer-Wasilla Highway.

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Because no federal funds are presently involved in that project element, this project is not listed in the STIP. However, State transportation planning must develop a plan to pay for an upgrade the entire length of the Palmer-Wasilla Highway, whether by using State funds exclusively or a combination of State and federal funds.

Regarding the Glenn Highway MP 34 to 50 Reconstruction (Parks to Palmer Fishhook), the STIP contains \$1.4 million in FFY08 for design, with construction funding after FFY09. DOT & PF solicited and received proposals for this project design in 2006 but has not proceeded with the design. If design funding is delayed to FFY08, as proposed by the STIP, this project will experience further delays. Palmer asks that the design phase funding remain in FFY07.

The project to extend Bogard Road east to an intersection with the Glenn Highway does not involve federal funds and so is not listed on the STIP. Palmer understands that this project will require significantly more funding than the \$13 million in State funds presently allocated to the project. It is more cost effective to utilize State funding to construct this project due to the reduced time period required for project planning as opposed to a project utilizing federal funds. Palmer asks that DOT & PF seek additional State funding to fully fund this project.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. If you have any questions, please contact me at 761-1304.

Sincerely,



Thomas Healy  
City Manager